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ABSTRACT

Humor can be an effective element of classroom teaching, serving to reduce tension, increase motivation, aid instruction and strengthen teacher/student relationships. A review of the literature reveals that research in this area is incomplete and inconclusive. This study surveys 5th- and 6th-grade teachers (N=50) for information on how they vary the use of humor; the value placed on humor; reasons for using humor; guidelines for using humor in the classroom; appropriate types of humor; and sarcasm. Results suggest the most commonly cited reasons for using humor include: behavior management; sparking interest; implementing instruction; and building or strengthening teacher/student relationships. Most teachers agree that sarcasm should never be used unless it is of a playful nature; also, that the use of humor varies with students' sophistication, intelligence, and maturity levels. Humor is not a peripheral issue in education; most teachers surveyed considered it an integral element in their teaching. Based on the literature and survey results, guidelines, recommendations, and suggestions for the effective use of humor in the classroom are presented. A copy of the humor survey is appended. (Contains 20 references.) (LL)

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Implications for Teachers' Use of Humor in the Classroom

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Humor in the Classroom

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Abstract

When used judiciously, humor can be an effective element of classroom teaching. It can serve to reduce tension, increase motivation, and aid instruction. However, the research is incomplete and inconclusive, particularly with regard to how teachers differentiate, or vary, their use of humor.

The goal of this study was to survey approximately fifty special, regular, and gifted education fifth- and sixth-grade teachers in a city school to determine their opinions on: value placed on humor, reasons for using it, guidelines, appropriate types of humor, sarcasm, and differentiation.

Results indicate general agreement between teachers' opinions and the research. Based on the survey and the research, the author presents a list of guidelines, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

Implications for Teachers' Use of Humor in the Classroom

LITERATURE REVIEW

Humor permeates our society. It can be found in homes, in the workplace, and in any other place where people congregate. It can also be found in the classroom. Teachers at all levels usually incorporate at least some humor in their instruction. Of course, teachers do not all use the same amount of humor, nor do they agree on what exactly constitutes humor. We might well ask if there are any common threads in all uses of classroom humor, especially at the elementary and middle school levels, which are the focus of this study.

In a study designed to aid children analyze and apply their own use of humor, Shibles (1978) argues that humor is created by the realization that there is some sort of a "mistake, but one which is not bad or harmful" (p. 12). Shibles bases his definition on the theories of the philosophers Dewey and Wittgenstein. In an attempt to define humor, Hebert (1991) concludes that, "[w]hile there remains considerable room for disagreement on the essential qualities of humor,

several researchers after reviewing the literature appear to have focused on a core quality . . . incongruity, as experienced cognitively and affectively" (pp. 4-5). Finally, Goor (1989) observed a principal and two teachers in a school and discovered that humor is likely to result from one or several of the following teacher behaviors: "(a) connecting personally with students, (b) enlivening the learning experience, (c) using alternatives to authoritarian discipline, and (d) encouraging risk-taking and higher level thinking" (pp. 19-20).

Definable or not, it is logical to ask whether humor as practiced by teachers has any practical benefits in the classroom or whether it exists merely for entertainment value.

Many studies indicate that humor has cognitive benefits for children. That is, when used effectively and appropriately, humor helps students learn in some way. Much of the evidence in support of this claim is anecdotal, though it should be noted that the fact that such a large amount of anecdotal evidence exists would seem to support this claim. Chenfeld, for example, cites a clinical psychologist as well as her own

teaching experience in claiming that in classes where teachers encourage laughter, students learn and retain more information (Chenfeld, 1990). Whitmer (1986) is more specific in advocating using newspaper humor, including but not limited to the comics, to develop students' reading and critical thinking skills. Guindal (1985) explains that humor is particularly useful in an EFL classroom (English as a foreign language). Here it can be used to develop vocabulary, teach phonetics, and introduce language concepts such as irony and euphemism.

The small amount of empirical studies that exist on this topic also support the notion that humor has cognitive benefits, but the researchers are typically more guarded in their advocacy of humor than are the teachers. Davies and Apter (1980) conducted a study that incorporated humorous vs. non-humorous slide tape presentations. They found that students learned more in the humorous presentation. Moreover, this effect persisted for at least one month after the presentations. Vance (1987) likewise studied the effect of humor on recognition and recall of information. He discovered that humor is an effective

aid, but only when the humor is contiguous to the instruction; i.e., it should not be integrated into the subject matter itself. Furthermore, the findings suggest that humor is most effective when students are not already interested or motivated to learn; humor is less effective with students who are already attentive to the material.

If we can conclude that humor has instructional benefits under certain conditions, we may well ask if it has non-academic benefits. Colwell and Wigle (1984) argue that humor has affective benefits, particularly in the reading/language arts curriculum. They cite learning theorists to support their belief that humor can motivate students who are bored or stressed or have negative attitudes toward school. It can also strengthen teacher/student rapport by enabling students to see that teachers have "well-rounded personalities" (p. 74). One difficulty in assessing the validity of affective claims is that they require value judgments and are therefore difficult to measure. Nor do all teachers agree on what exactly constitutes boredom or a negative attitude. Moreover, most of the empirical research on the topic was conducted at the collegiate

level. Nevertheless, Bryant and Zillmann, in a review of the literature (Bryant and Zillmann, 1988), conclude that "it seems prudent to make the cautious generalization of 'it seems like' the judicious use of humor in the classroom will increase children's enjoyment of learning as well as their positive disposition toward the content of their lessons" (p. 63). However, they caution teachers to use no humor rather than risk using humor that students do not perceive as genuine and spontaneous.

Finally, there exists evidence, both anecdotal and empirical, to suggest that humor can serve as an aid in behavior management. Ackerman and Dummer (1982) advocate humor in a physical education setting as one of several preventive techniques to counter undesirable behavior, primarily because of its ability to reduce tension. Crowley (1991) studied six mainstreamed behavior disordered students and discovered that the students perceive humor as one of several helpful teacher intervention strategies.

Clearly humor has many practical benefits in the classroom though, again, the empirical evidence tends to be more guarded than the anecdotal evidence. Are

there situations in which humor can prove counterproductive? As cited earlier (Bryant and Zillmann, 1988) teachers' use of humor must be perceived as natural, else it may backfire. Obviously, teachers who normally feel uncomfortable using humor must be wary of attempting to force it into their classrooms. Bryant and Zillmann also note that irony and other forms of "distortion humor" can confuse children and create faulty ideas that are difficult to correct. They cite research to suggest that "teachers of children, especially young children, should refrain from using such humor unless they are certain that the children have the faculties and knowledge to immediately 'get the humor' and make the necessary cognitive corrections" (p. 73). It also appears, though the evidence is far from conclusive, that incorporating humor in tests to reduce test anxiety may actually impair student performance (Terry and Woods, 1975).

With regard to sarcasm, although some researchers suggest that it and other forms of ridicule may be useful as a behavior management technique, most recommend strongly against it. Collins (1986) notes

that sarcasm is brutal by nature and can severely damage students' self-esteem and teacher/student relationships. Bryant and Zillmann suggest that although sarcasm and ridicule "may serve a corrective function, the long-term consequence of diminished esteem in the eyes of students may make the immediate gains in terms of behavioral correction not worth the costs" (p. 72).

Sullivan (1992) offers other cautions: (1) teachers must recognize when humor is not appropriate; that is, their students "are taught by a professional, not Bozo the Clown" (p. 38); (2) teachers should never joke about a student's name because of the potential damage to the student's self-esteem; (3) teachers should not simply tell jokes in class but should keep their humor relevant to the instruction since telling jokes "reduces valuable class time and may result in sexist and racist humor that will create problems" (p. 38).

Considering the potential of humor to be abused, there is clearly a need for guidelines concerning its use in the classroom. In addition to those already discussed, a number of researchers have offered other

suggestions. Sullivan (1992) contends that teachers should be willing to laugh at themselves and should be careful to match their humor to the level of their students. He also suggests encouraging students to participate in the humor process, such as by creating puns or by finding humorous quotations. Hebert (1991) also advises teachers to be willing to laugh at themselves and to know their audience well. In addition, he recommends using visual examples of humor, opening class with a joke, and telling humorous anecdotes. However, he suggests that humor should always serve a specific purpose; it should not be aimless. Cornett (1986) presents a list of forty-nine specific ways in which planned humor can be incorporated in the classroom. Her only guidelines are that teachers should adopt a playful mind, "think funny" (p. 30), and encourage humor from their students.

THE STUDY

Having analyzed the literature, this author believes that humor can and should be an integral part of teaching. Yet given the value that many educators place on humor, it is surprising that there is little if any information concerning the differentiation of teachers' use of humor. That is, do teachers vary the amount and/or type of humor that they use with their students? To be sure, some researchers have focused on humor in a special education class (Michael, 1987; Kelly, 1983) or a gifted education class (Gleason, 1991). But there is virtually no information on how teachers differentiate within and among their classes. Yet if humor is an integral part of instruction, and if we agree that it is necessary to vary instruction according to the needs of students, then is it not also necessary for teachers to vary their use of humor? If so, then what is available to help teachers learn about how, why, and when they should differentiate?

One of the purposes of this study is to survey practicing teachers for information on how they vary their use of humor. In order to obtain a more complete view of teachers' use of humor, however, I will first

consider the following categories: (1) the value that teachers place on humor; (2) their reasons for using humor; (3) guidelines for using humor in the classroom; (4) appropriate types of humor; and (5) sarcasm. In addition, I will note and discuss differences among special education, regular education, and gifted education teachers. Finally, I will compare the results to the research and make specific recommendations as well as suggestions for further study.

DESIGN

The study consists of surveys distributed to thirty-one regular education (RE) teachers, fifteen special education (SE) teachers, and four gifted education (GE) teachers in the fifth and sixth grades in an elementary school in central Virginia. Only the academic teachers were surveyed, and all were asked to respond anonymously. The school has resource centers and self-contained classes for ED, BD, LD, and MR students, as well as a Quest program for the GE students. The RE and GE students are taught in teams of four or five teachers (there are no self-contained classes for these students). In math and language arts, students are tracked according to ability level.

Because of the diversity of the student population, the school is particularly conducive to obtaining information about the differential use of humor. Also, since all of the teachers surveyed teach in the same school, there was no need to control for other variables, such as locations of schools or different student populations.

The survey (see Appendix) consists of one page of quantitative questions and another page of qualitative

questions. In this way the responses to each type could be used to support the other. The responses to the questions on the first page were converted to a scale. A response of "strongly agree" received a 1, "agree" a 2, "neutral" a 3, "disagree" a 4, and "strongly disagree" a 5. Averages were recorded for each of the three types of teachers for each question. An average score of 2.7, for example, indicates a modest amount of agreement while a score of 4.2 indicates somewhat strong disagreement. For the question on the top of the second page concerning the importance of humor, a 0 indicates no importance while a 10 indicates extreme importance.

LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations to this study which will be discussed before the results are presented. First, as noted earlier, humor is difficult to define. Teachers have their own ideas regarding what constitutes humor. Moreover, teachers work in a variety of settings and encounter diverse students and situations. The fact that the survey was conducted at one school helps to reduce, but obviously not eliminate, some of these factors. Also, any differences discovered may be due, at least in part, not to the students but to the personalities of the teachers themselves. That is, it may be that SE, RE, and GE educators are different from each other by their very nature.

There are also problems with the reliability of the survey. The response rate was only 60%, and only two of the four GE surveys were returned, making generalizations in this area particularly hazardous. Three teachers did not complete the back page of the survey, which contained the qualitative questions. The seventh question on the first page is ambiguous because it is unclear whether it means that humor as a whole or

simply sophisticated humor is used more by teachers. It is also unclear what "sarcasm" means. Some teachers believe that it is hurtful by definition. Others drew a distinction by saying that sarcasm can also be a light form of gentle teasing.

Finally, a couple of problems exist which are inherent in most surveys. It is one thing for teachers to express certain beliefs about humor, but it is another whether they "practice what they preach." Also, teachers may have felt slightly pressured to give the "correct" answer; i.e., what they thought they were "supposed" to answer. It is hoped that the anonymity of the surveys reduced the likelihood of this possibility.

RESULTS

With these cautions in mind, we can now look at the results. All data (quantitative and qualitative) will be analyzed together. The following categories will be considered: importance of humor, reasons for using humor, guidelines, appropriate types, sarcasm, and differentiation.

As a whole the teachers consider humor moderately important in their classrooms; the mean score on the rating scale was 6.73. However, SE teachers seemed to rate humor more important than did RE teachers, with average scores of 7.56 and 6.17, respectively. GE teachers scored highest with 8.50. These findings are strengthened by the fact that the teachers as a whole were either neutral toward or disagreed with the statement that humor should be used sparingly else students will not treat the teacher or the subject matter seriously (GE: 4.50, SE: 3.38, RE: 2.95).

Given the value that these teachers place on humor, what reasons do they give for using humor in the classroom? For the three groups the most commonly cited reason for using humor is its function as a behavior management technique. This was particularly

true for SE teachers. Specifically, humor can serve to reduce tension, resulting in students who are less likely to "go off" at the slightest provocation.

Next to reducing tension the most frequently cited reason for using humor is its role as a motivation technique or a means to spark interest, especially as an introduction to a topic. Another reason is that it can help teachers implement instruction. For example, a teacher may create a pun to help students remember a specific concept. Humor is also used as a means of building or strengthening teacher/student relationships, particularly on an individual level. As some teachers have explained, using humor individually with a student is often a means of "connecting" with the student, of letting him or her know that the teacher has a "human" side. Finally, several teachers stated that they use humor to help themselves, usually to help them maintain their interest or to reduce their own tension. One RE teacher remarked that humor "makes the change of class easier -- you're less apt to carry over hostilities from one class to another. Also humor makes for a more relaxed atmosphere which I am comfortable in. So it helps the teacher as well as

students."

Having considered reasons why teachers use humor in their classrooms, we might well ask what guidelines they have. For most teachers the most important guideline is that humor should never be used to embarrass, ridicule, or otherwise harm a student. Teachers at all levels were adamant about this point. Beyond this teachers stressed the need for using humor for a specific purpose. That is, humor should not be used for its own sake or just to be silly. Several teachers warned that aimless humor can result in misbehavior and a waste of valuable class time.

Many teachers also stressed the need to keep humor appropriate to the ability level of the students. Though this may seem an obvious need, it is unclear exactly what it means. For teachers did not agree that they should always use humor that all students will understand. Instead, they were neutral (2.83). Nor did they believe that they should stop to explain a humorous incident that some students did not comprehend. Again they were neutral (3.23).

Perhaps these points can be reconciled by saying that teachers use humor that they know most, but not

necessarily all, students can handle. Thus, they may use humor that is intellectually challenging, rather than a base level of humor that all students will readily understand. Teachers may also feel that stopping to explain humor would interrupt the continuity of a lesson and consume valuable instructional time. It would also tend to dissipate the humor.

Finally, teachers recommend that humor should be spontaneous and that it should only be used when it comes naturally and fits the teacher's personality. Several teachers explicitly stated that they do not plan humor.

One may well ask if these guidelines can be implemented with all forms of humor, or whether some forms are more appropriate than others. Teachers suggest that most types of humor are appropriate, as long as they are used in good taste, with no malice or ridicule directed toward any student. (Sarcasm will be considered separately.) More specifically, the vast majority of teachers agree and many specifically recommend that teachers be willing to laugh at themselves (1.27), particularly when they have made a

mistake. They do not feel that this is unprofessional (4.47). In fact, many wrote that teachers' self-directed humor shows the students that their teachers are "real people" who make mistakes.

Teachers commented on a variety of other types of humor. In particular, few teachers engage in formal joke telling, and several even recommend against it. Some teachers suggest using humorous pictures or making puns for reasons discussed earlier. Here, however, there are differences among the three levels. SE teachers rarely use complex humor, particularly dry wit. Some specifically mentioned that they do not use dry wit at all. Instead, they tend to prefer simpler humor that students will more readily understand. As one SE teacher explained, "[f]unny pictures work, <u>simple</u> jokes. Most riddles are too difficult and dry wit is incomprehensible." On the other hand, RE and SE teachers are much more willing to use sophisticated humor like puns, riddles, and dry wit. Finally, SE teachers are more likely than GE and RE teachers to open class with a joke. Perhaps this can best be explained by the fact that SE teachers are the most likely of the three groups to use humor to reduce

tension. Joke telling could be a means to reduce this tension.

With regard to sarcasm, most teachers agree that it should never be used (2.38) because it violates their belief that humor should never be used to damage the self-esteem of a student. However, some teachers did not seem to distinguish among types of sarcasm; i.e., they defined sarcasm as brutal by nature and excluded any form of playful teasing that does not harm a student's self-esteem. According to an RE teacher, "[t]he only time sarcasm would be acceptable would be if it did not hurt anyone's feelings, but, then that wouldn't be sarcasm, would it?"

But sarcasm can be playful teasing, as several teachers pointed out. These teachers suggested that sarcasm may be used, but only if it is of the playful nature, if it is certain that the students will understand it, and if the students are mature enough to "handle" it. Some of these teachers said that sarcasm is best used in a one-on-one, non-academic context, while others said that they use it carefully as a gentle means of behavior management.

The three groups differ somewhat in their approach

to sarcasm. RE teachers, and particularly GE teachers, are more likely than SE teachers to use sarcasm. Perhaps SE teachers have to be particularly concerned that their students do not misunderstand it. This conjecture is supported by the fact that SE teachers are less apt than RE and GE teachers to use sophisticated humor, of which sarcasm is a type.

Finally, one of the major purposes of this study is to determine how teachers vary their use of humor. Do they use it more with some students than with others? Are there differences within a class as well as among classes? If so, what accounts for these differences? Virtually every teacher indicated that he or she differentiates in some way. The most common way for teachers to differentiate is by the students' abilities. That is, teachers tend to use more sophisticated forms of humor with brighter students. This finding is indirectly supported by two facts, previously discussed. First, teachers do not necessarily refrain from using humor which some students will not comprehend. Second, they are not prone to stop class to explain a humorous incident to the "slow" students.

Yet with regard to intellectual ability, although teachers vary the *type* of humor, they do not vary the *amount*. "I use [humor] with all my classes. Higher levels are easier but I don't deprive my lower groups," said one RE teacher. Another RE teacher explained that while her brighter students are better able to understand her "bizarre sense of humor," one of her goals with her low level students "is to help them develop a sense of humor." Teachers were also neutral (3.1) toward the statement that they sometimes refrain from using humor with students with lower ability out of fear that these are more likely to misbehave.

Another factor that causes teachers at all levels to vary their use of humor is the maturity level of the students. Teachers are more likely to use humor with students who are more mature. This maturity can be demonstrated in two ways. First, students must be able to "handle" the humor, particularly if it is of the playful teasing kind. Second, they must recognize the teacher's purpose in using the humor. That is, they can laugh, but they have to be able to return to work; teachers are far less likely to use humor with students who are easily "carried away." For one RE teacher

"[k]ids who are mature enough to have fun with [humor] then settle right back down to work are great to joke around with. Those who "lose it" and can't settle back down, I don't joke as much with. It is more of a maturity, than grade level, thing."

A third important factor in differentiation is the relationship between the teacher and the students. Teachers tend to use humor more with students who have personalities that allow them to respond enthusiastically and to reciprocate similar humor. Similarly, teachers prefer using humor when the class is interested, not when it is bored. These two points may seem obvious. However, a few teachers pointed out that they make it a point sometimes to use humor with students who are normally very serious and who do *not* normally respond enthusiastically to humor. Teachers use this technique as a means of "loosening up" these students and encouraging them not to take matters too seriously. Also, it is worth repeating that research generally supports the notion that humor is most beneficial when it is used with students who are bored or otherwise unmotivated, *not* students who are already interested in instruction, as these teachers prefer.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Humor is clearly not a peripheral issue in education; most teachers surveyed consider it an integral element in their teaching. They also cite a number of reasons for using humor (e.g., to reduce tension, motivate students, aid instruction, strengthen teacher/student relationships, and help the teacher stay interested and relaxed). Yet if teachers are to use humor effectively, there are a number of guidelines that they must consider. What are some of the most important of these guidelines, as determined by the research as well as teacher survey responses; and what types of humor are most appropriate?

First, teachers should be aware of and receptive to humor's many uses, particularly those cited above. Second, humor should never be used to ridicule or embarrass a student. Third, humor should never be aimless; it should serve a specific purpose, even if it is used spontaneously. Fourth, humor should be made appropriate to the students' ability levels. Ideally this means that it should challenge the students, though it is possible that not all students will understand it. Fifth, teachers should recognize the

uses of spontaneous as well as planned humor; they should incorporate both into their teaching. Sixth, teachers should laugh at themselves occasionally to show their students that they are "real people." Seventh, they should use sarcasm only if it is of the playful kind, if they are certain that the students will understand it, and if the students are mature enough to take it. Ideally it should be used in a personal one-on-one context to minimize the risk of embarrassment. The remaining guidelines pertain to differentiation and will be considered separately.

Although these guidelines are supported by the available research, much of this is anecdotal. Thus, there is a need for more empirical research, especially with regard to the effectiveness of teachers' self-directed laughter, degrees and types of sarcasm (the research appears to make no distinctions), and types of humor that are most appropriate for various ability levels. Other research could explore the differences in humor as practiced by male vs. female teachers. (In this study forty-six of the fifty teachers are women.) It could also address possible differences in the way humor is used within the various types of SE classes.

The final category is differentiation, a subject in much need of further research. If we agree that humor is an important element of effective teaching and that teachers should vary their instruction according to the needs of the students, then they should also vary their use of humor. Earlier I noted that, with regard to intellectual ability, teachers tend to vary the type but not the amount of humor. They use more sophisticated humor with brighter students, but they do not deprive their lower level students of simpler humor that is appropriate to their level. This is an appropriate form of differentiation.

However, teachers do use more humor with students who are more mature and more likely to "settle down" after a joke. They also use it more with students who reciprocate humor and with whom the teacher has a positive relationship. But are these practices appropriate? Are they fair to the less mature students and to the students who do not have a positive rapport with their teacher? Certainly the same humor should not be used with all students. But teachers should be able to find and use humor appropriate to *all* students, even when taking into account their maturity and their

personal relationship with the teacher. To take the "easy way out" by depriving some students of humor simply because it is difficult to use it with them is wrong. Furthermore, teachers who do not use much humor with students with whom they are not close would do well to consider the matter in a different way. That is, perhaps teachers could use humor as a *means* of improving their relationships with these students; humor could be used proactively instead of reactively.

Finally, how do the responses of the teachers surveyed compare with the research? For the most part there is consistent agreement, which strengthens the credibility of both the teachers and the researchers. However, two notable differences should be discussed. First, teachers prefer to use humor when their students are interested rather than when they are bored. Research suggests, however, that humor is more effective when students are bored or otherwise unmotivated to learn. That is, it seems to be more effective in sparking interest than in maintaining it. We need more research to resolve this discrepancy.

Second, many teachers say that they prefer spontaneous humor. Several specifically said that they

do not plan humor. Spontaneous humor certainly has an important place in teaching especially since students benefit most when they sense that their teachers are open and genuine. Yet many researchers, like Cornett and Hebert (see above), have offered numerous specific, practical examples of how teachers can effectively incorporate planned humor in their classrooms. Teachers would do well to consider such suggestions.

Because of these inconsistencies and because of the potential of humor to be misused, I maintain that teacher education programs should contain instruction and guidelines on how to incorporate humor in the classroom. Of course, it should always be remembered that humor comes more naturally to some teachers than to others and that teachers must not try to force humor upon their students. Nevertheless, even teachers who think that they do not have a humorous personality should at least recognize the importance of humor. They should be receptive to opportunities for using humor and not try to stifle it. Since it is difficult to teach someone how to use humor spontaneously, teacher education programs could focus on how to include planned humor in instruction.

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Appendix

HUMOR SURVEY

For the questions on this page, please indicate whether you strongly agree (SA), agree (A), are neutral or have no opinion (N), disagree (D), or strongly disagree (SD).

____ I believe in sometimes opening class with a joke.

____ Humor is more appropriate with a smaller group of students.

____ I use different amounts of humor based on the ability levels of my students.

____ I sometimes refrain from using humor with students with lower ability because I fear that they are more likely to misbehave; i. e., the class could easily get "out of control."

____ Teachers must be willing to laugh at themselves because this shows the students that their teachers are "real people" who can make mistakes.

____ Teachers should NOT laugh at themselves because, in the long run, this will diminish their authority and professionalism in the eyes of the students.

____ Higher level students more readily understand sophisticated humor than do lower level students; thus, I find that I use humor more with these higher level students.

____ The best time to use humor is when the class appears bored.

____ The best time to use humor is when the class appears interested.

____ Sarcasm is inappropriate and should never be used.

____ If some students do not understand a joke, it is best to stop and explain it to everyone.

____ Teachers should be wary of using humor that they know some students will not understand.

____ Humor should never be used to embarrass or ridicule a student.

____ Humor should be used only sparingly; otherwise, the students will not take the teacher or the subject matter seriously.

I think that humor is BEST used to (choose ONLY ONE):

____ 1) reduce tension
____ 2) maintain students' interest
____ 3) help implement instruction
____ 4) aid with classroom management
____ 5) [none of the above]

On a scale of 0 to 10, how important is humor in your classroom?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
(completely unimportant) (extremely important)

How much humor do you use in your classroom, and what are your reasons for using or not using it?

What guidelines do you have for using humor in your type of classroom?

If you use humor with some students more than with others, what accounts for this difference?

What kinds of humor (i. e., sarcasm, joke-telling, dry wit, humorous pictures) are appropriate and what kinds are not?

If you believe that sarcasm may be appropriate, under what conditions is this the case?